

Page Mechanical Group, Inc. reaches a Major Milestone for its Employees

Page Mechanical Group, Inc. (PMG), based out of Fort Myers Florida announced it has achieved a major milestone in employee education. PMG provides HVAC, Plumbing and Electrical services to the new construction and service markets here in southwest Florida. The company announced it has kicked off its own apprenticeship training program this week. The program is accredited through the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) and offers their employees an “in house” Apprenticeship Training Program in Pipe Fitting, Welding, Sheet Metal Fabrication and Insulation trades. This is provided at no costs to the employees. The program is offered in both English as well as Spanish languages. At present PMG has a total of thirty students enrolled in both the English and Spanish versions of the program.



Dave Collins addressing the Page's first students

Dave Collins, one of the owners and President, while addressing the first students of the program relayed to them *“This is an important step in your future and careers. I once sat in the very seats you are sitting in today. I started as an apprentice taking classes at night and working during the day.”* He went on to say that it was important that we be able to give back to the company’s workers in the form of high quality trade related education. *“This program will not only benefit our employees, our company, and our clients, but will also strengthen our core principles of quality workmanship and commitment to safety. PMG believes that all accidents are preventable.”*



Pipe/Welding and Sheet Metal students start their CORE



Brett Ulakovic Sheet Metal Instructor shows Student Clint Robison proper usage of shop equipment

PMG had a vision that it would be able to provide trade related education to its employees; it also has a need for specific highly skilled tradesman. With the help from NCCER and the Florida Department of Education they formed an educational committee and started on a path to develop the program. The committee members were comprised of staff from all levels of the organization and they worked systematically to develop and implement the key elements of this important program.

Like other industries throughout the United States the construction industry is suffering from a lack of skilled tradesman. This is due to three significant factors. The first is an aging workforce. The baby boomer generation are now reaching the age of retirement and are leaving the workforce. With that, their skills are also leaving the workforce at an alarming rate and not being replaced. The second factor is the Millennial and Generation X population have been driven and geared toward technology based careers. And the third factor was the market and financial crisis that occurred back in 2008/2009. Many



Student Nick Thomas working with one of PMG's senior pipe fitters

employers were forced to cut staff due to the lack of work within the construction industry. This caused skilled tradesman to make career changes and/or leave the Southwest Florida market in search of sustainable work.



PMG believes that in order to provide the highest quality products we need to have a highly trained workforce. However, as mentioned above, finding the skilled tradesman is becoming increasingly difficult. The company's management strongly believe the apprenticeship training program they have implemented, will not only help to bridge the growing skills gap, but it will also develop the required tradesman that PMG and the industry needs to sustain Southwest Florida's and the country's economic engine.

Jim Worley, the Director of Education and Safety Assurance and PMG's NCCER Master Trainer, administers the program. Stating the creation of a program that will give industry leading education is important to the company and a difficult task to develop and implement. *"Knowing that the curriculum we deliver will determine the future careers of our employees is a daunting task that carries with it a heavy responsibility."* The owners and committee know *"We have to get this right"*



Jim Worley instructing the first class of craft instructors

All of the instructors for the program are hand selected from within the company and complete a rigorous training course to become "Certified Instructors". They must also have journeyman level experience in the trade they will teach. These requirements ensure we are delivering the highest quality education to our students and ultimately, the highest quality workman to the industry.

Through the NCCER curriculum and on the job training, the courses are designed to take the student from an entry level apprentice to a fully qualified journeyman. There is no initial experience required to enroll in the program and it is designed to attract young workers to these rewarding careers. The program has five levels starting with a base CORE introduction to the construction and four trade levels which on average last one year each. This is a very detailed and in-depth program that provides a great alternative to those whom choose not to pursue a career that requires a college education.



Matt Jerrells addressing a group of employees during a recent employee training event

Matt Jerrells, the Operations Director and one of the program instructors, (also a product of apprenticeship training) believes this allows our employees a great opportunity. Adding *"they can work in the industry, earn a great wage, and pursue the educational requirements that will advance their career simultaneously."* It would be hard to attend any other educational program that provides all of these opportunities at the same time. The response to the PMG's program has been overwhelming. The initial classes were filled to capacity very quickly and we are extremely excited that thirty employees have taken that next step in their career development.



Matt Jerrells went on to say *“The amazing thing is that these thirty students represent nearly twenty percent of our workforce. That is a great start for a newly developed program.”*



Orlan Albite, CORE and Plumbing instructor instructing PMG Spanish Plumbing Students

As the company moves forward with their program, they are already planning for the next phase of educational opportunities. We plan to introduce curriculum focusing on fundamentals in crew leadership as well as courses in project management. Dave Collins and William Jones as Owners state *“this will allow PMG to develop and train the future leadership of the company from within the organization.”* These programs will provide to our employees, career progression opportunities in the construction industry that is a true viable option to the standard college education. Together with our employees, we will build a stronger organization of highly skilled tradesman that will meet the growing

needs of the industry and carry the company years into the future.